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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Wednesday, August 12, 1936.

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Hello folks. Last Monday in my garden calendar I emphasized the importance of providing suitable storage space for taking care of whatever fruits or vegetables you may have in your orchards and gardens at the close of the season. When I went home that evening Mrs. Beattie, who by the way is my most critical critic, made the remark, "That's all right about providing a place to store fruits and vegetables, but how about making a special effort to grow some good things to store?" Which reminds me that there is no off season in gardening and if you are to get the most out of your home fruit plantings and your gardens you've got to keep everlastingly at it.

We are all too often inclined to accept crop failures as inevitable and as something over which we have no control. With the exception of disastrous droughts such as many of you folks are experiencing this season, the production of good crops of fruit and vegetables is almost entirely within the control of the grower. Recent investigations have shown the importance of irrigation in eastern apple orchards and some form of irrigation promises to become a standard practice with eastern apple growers. Right now the strawberry crop for the season of 1937 is being very largely determined by the treatment that the strawberry fields are being subjected to. The buds that bear the crop of apples, cherries, pears, peaches or plums next year are forming now and if the fruit trees are allowed to suffer for moisture or plant food at this season the crop of next year will be seriously affected. Those of you who grow everbearing or fall bearing strawberries should remember that the buds that produce the fall crop are formed during July and August and if the plants suffer for moisture, plant food or cultivation during the bud forming period you will have a short crop of berries later. The same holds for the berries that ripen in the spring or early summer, their fruiting buds are formed in the fall and that is the time that they require the greatest attention, and I might add, very frequently get the least attention.

Not everyone can provide means of irrigating their gardens during periods of drought and shortage of rainfall but with rural electrification and the extension of power lines to rural districts it is often possible to install small pumping plants and to irrigate gardens and home fruit plantings. With modern methods of well drilling it is often possible to tap deeper and inexhaustible supplies of pure water and the cost of pumping and delivering the water to the crops is very small after you once have the equipment installed. I have a very excellent well on my place which is equipped with a small electric driven pump and sometimes we keep that pump running from early morning until late evening. I noticed last night that my electric bill for that pump during the month of July was just 57 cents and I judge that we have pumped about 20 thousand gal-

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lons of water. I am sure that this irrigation between rains has had a lot to do with the fine lima beans, tomatoes, cabbage, and golden bantam sweet corn that we have been eating from our garden the past four or five weeks.

We have had several fairly good showers here around Washington during the past three or four weeks but as a rule these rains have been of short duration and have not moistened the soil to any great depth. For this reason I have been watering my fruit trees and as a result I do not have any yellowing or shedding of the foliage and my trees look healthy and vigorous. I think I hear some of you saying, he has only a few trees to care for and he can water and cultivate them. I want to tell you that this type of work can be carried on a large scale much more efficiently than on a small scale, but if you are interested in your garden and your orchard and take pride in making it the best you will not hesitate to go to some trouble to provide the proper growing conditions. The majority of our most successful eastern gardeners have large areas under irrigation, and, as I said I believe orchard irrigation will shortly become a standard cultural practice everywhere.

Going back for a moment to our home vegetable gardens let me suggest that in making late plantings of beans, beets, carrots, lettuce and radishes, if you will open the little furrows, drop the seeds and then run a little stream of water over the seeds before covering them you will have success in getting a stand. This supplies the moisture that is essential to the sprouting of the seeds and by covering with slightly dryer soil the seedlings will have no difficulty coming up. In extreme cases strips of cloth, burlap or narrow boards may be laid over the rows for a couple of days to retain moisture, but the covering must be removed before the seedlings appear. Fine sweepings from the barnlot scattered over the rows will provide a mulch and at the same time stimulate the growth of the crops. In small or town gardens peat moss or a layer of soil sifted over the row will help to get the plants to come through. These are little things but they often mean the difference between success and failure especially in our fall gardens.

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